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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 001010

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SUBJECT: AZERBAIJANI OFFICIALS GRATEFUL FOR US TRANSPARENCY
ON US-RUSSIAN MISSILE DEFENSE CONSULTATIONS

REF: A. STATE 112010

[1](#)B. STATE 107265

[1](#)C. STATE 109573

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Donald Lu for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In response to EUR DAS Bryza and Charge's delivery of reftel B demarche points, Azerbaijani officials have said that they welcome the exchange of information, and support continued U.S.-Russian consultations on President Putin's missile defense proposals. The Azerbaijani Government, however, wants to be informed about the status of these discussions and brought closer into the discussions if the U.S. and Russia come to agreement on the Gabala radar station. President Ilham Aliyev, Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov, and Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Novruz Mammadov have expressed their gratitude for U.S. transparency about the status of U.S.-Russian consultations, and each welcomed the proposal for the visit of a U.S. team to the Gabala radar station. Both the President and the Deputy Foreign Minister stressed that Azerbaijan will need to participate in the visit. President Advisor Mammadov said that a visit later this month would be possible, despite the likely visit of the Iranian President in late August. End Summary.

Aliyev Grateful for the Update

[1](#)2. (C) Giving President Aliyev a readout of the recent USG talks with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Kisylak, EUR DAS Bryza said that on July 30 there was the first of three planned expert-level bilateral talks on the possibility of joint use of Gabala. Bryza said that the USG realized that Gabala was Azerbaijan's property and would keep Azerbaijan fully aware of the talks as they continued, and would seek Azerbaijan's permission for any agreement reached between the USG and Russia. "There will be nothing about you without you," Bryza assured President Aliyev.

[1](#)3. (C) Bryza asked the President whether Azerbaijan would support the Russian proposal for an American delegation to visit the Gabala radar station. President Aliyev thanked Bryza for the briefing, asking him to keep Foreign Minister Mammadyarov apprised. He agreed to support the visit of an American team to Gabala, but emphasized that Azerbaijan would also need to participate in the visit. Bryza said one good outcome of the Kisylak talks was the USG-russian agreement

that an Iranian missile threat did exist. Bryza asked Aliyev whether he had a preference as to Gabala being used merely to monitor, or whether it should undergo upgrades to allow it to play a fuller role in missile defense. President Aliyev said he had no preference.

Azimov Asks for Increased Engagement if U.S.-Russia Agree

14. (C) Charge separately briefed Deputy FM Araz Azimov August 8 on the July 30 U.S.-Russian missile defense experts-level meeting, drawing from reftels b and c. Azimov thanked Charge for the U.S. commitment to transparency. Summarizing the GOAJ's position, Azimov said Baku is ready to "go step by step" with the U.S. and Russia on Putin's proposals and that trilateral exchanges would be helpful. He observed that to the degree the U.S. and Russia clarify their positions on Putin's proposals, Azerbaijan seeks to be more engaged in these discussions.

15. (C) Commenting on Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Kisylak's late July visit to Baku, Azimov said Moscow is not confident the U.S. will accept access to tracking information from Gabala in exchange for a U.S. pledge to drop its plans for missile defense-related installations in Europe. Azimov drew a distinction between Baku and Moscow's threat perception of Iran's missile program. Moscow "pretends" that Iran's missile program does not pose a threat to the U.S. and Eurasia, while Baku understands the need for caution with Tehran. Azimov also questioned Moscow's sincerity in wanting to cooperate with the U.S. on missile defense, observing that Azerbaijan has in the past seized Russian missile components transiting to Iran.

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16. (C) Referring to a potential U.S.-Russian visit to the Gabala radar site, Azimov said he personally would like to participate. Azimov met August 7 with Russian Ambassador Vasily Istratov who said that he personally supported Azerbaijani involvement in a trip to Gabala and would seek Moscow's approval of this as well. Azimov noted that the American information on the missile defense talks was more complete than the Russian Ambassador's briefing.

17. (C) On the timing of a U.S.-Russian visit to Gabala, Azimov said the GOAJ would like to avoid a conflict with Iranian President Ahmadinejad's planned visit to Baku, but scheduling the Ahmadinejad visit was a bit like "Waiting for Godot." He genuinely appeared to be unaware of specific dates for the Iranian visit and asked his subordinate to check whether the dates had been confirmed. Azimov agreed with Charge's offer to query Washington on suggested dates for the U.S.-Russian visit and then to share this information with the MFA and the Russian Embassy.

Presidential Advisor Sees No Conflict with Iranian Visit

18. (C) On August 10, Charge briefed Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Novruz Mammadov on reftel b points and the dates for the U.S. visit to Gabala contained in reftel a. Mammadov said that he has been working for several weeks on the planned visit by Iranian President Ahmadinejad to Baku, but as yet no firm dates had been established. He indicated that recently they were looking at the week of August 20, but now President Aliyev is planning to be out of town on August 21-22. Mammadov did not believe either of the proposed U.S. visit dates (August 23-24 or August 30-31) posed any problems in relation to the Ahmadinejad visit. Separately, Post sent a dipnote to Deputy FM Azimov who said he would coordinate the formal Azerbaijani response to the proposed dates for the visit, adding a request that Azerbaijan indicate by August 15 whether these dates are possible.

Comment

19. (C) As the preceding comments indicated, GOAJ officials are grateful for Washington's transparency on U.S.-Russian missile defense consultations. Reftels b and c have allowed Post to assure the GOAJ that we are committed to transparency. Post will seek a formal concurrence on the visit dates proposed in reftel a and report this to the Department soonest.
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